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## Key factors in Sr-doped LaBO<sub>3</sub> (B=Co or Mn) perovskites for NO oxidation in efficient diesel exhaust purification

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### ABSTRACT

Perovskites have attracted attention in recent years as an economic alternative to noble metals in oxidation processes. Synthesis conditions of LaCoO<sub>3</sub> and LaMnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites have been studied varying citrate to nitrate molar ratio in the starting solution, pH and calcination protocol, with the aim of obtaining high purity perovskites, absence of impurities, and with enhanced textural properties. Once synthesis conditions were established, strontium was incorporated in the perovskite lattice as a textural and structural promoter, by substituting lanthanum with different doping levels, i.e. La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>BO<sub>3</sub>, La<sub>0.8</sub>Sr<sub>0.2</sub>BO<sub>3</sub>, La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>BO<sub>3</sub>, La<sub>0.6</sub>Sr<sub>0.4</sub>BO<sub>3</sub> and La<sub>0.5</sub>Sr<sub>0.5</sub>BO<sub>3</sub> with B=Co or Mn. The prepared solids were characterized in terms of crystalline phase identification (XRD), specific surface area (N<sub>2</sub> adsorption-desorption at -196 °C), reducibility and oxidation state of transition metal ions (H<sub>2</sub>-TPR), quantification of adsorbed oxygen species (O<sub>2</sub>-TPD) and surface elemental composition (XPS). Charge imbalance associated to strontium (Sr<sup>2+</sup>) incorporation in the perovskite lattice in substitution of lanthanum (La<sup>3+</sup>) was preferentially balanced by Mn<sup>4+</sup> promotion in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites, whereas formation of oxygen vacancies seems to be the mechanism for charge compensation in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> perovskites, where Co ions remained as Co<sup>3+</sup> ions. Strontium doped perovskites further improved NO conversion compared to the non-substituted formulations. The best NO oxidation performance was obtained with La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples, achieving maximum NO conversion of 83 and 65% at 300 and 325 °C, respectively. Higher oxidation capacity of La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> sample was associated to the higher oxygen mobility and exchange capacity between oxygen in the lattice and gas phase oxygen. It is worth noting that prepared perovskites presented far higher NO oxidation capacity than platinum-based NSR model catalysts, confirming perovskites as an economic alternative to catalyze NO oxidation reactions in automotive catalysis.

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## 1. Introduction

Diesel engines present higher fuel efficiency than stoichiometric gasoline engines and thereby emit less CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere. In contrast, the clean-up of diesel exhaust gases is even more challenging than gasoline engines exhaust gases, due to the nature of the emission, including soot, and also due to the net oxidizing environment that limits NO<sub>x</sub> reduction [1]. In order to meet stringent emission standards, diesel engines implemented catalytic processes such as Diesel Oxidation Catalyst (DOC) [2] or Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) [3]. In the DOC, unburned hydrocarbons as well as carbon monoxide are completely oxidized to CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O while NO is converted into NO<sub>2</sub>. Afterwards, soot is trapped

in DPF and continuously regenerated by oxidation with NO<sub>2</sub> produced in the DOC. However, this strategy fails in meeting EURO VI standards regarding NO<sub>x</sub> emissions, and consequently additional catalytic strategies are mandatory to be implemented, such as NO<sub>x</sub> Storage and Reduction (NSR) [4] or Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) [5]. In the NSR technology, NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation is considered a primary step to promote NO<sub>x</sub> storage via nitrites or nitrates [6,7] formed over an alkali or alkali-earth material, because NO<sub>2</sub> adsorption occurs much faster than NO [4]. In the SCR technology NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation is also of critical importance [8] being well known that the fast SCR reaction activates when NO/NO<sub>2</sub> = 1/1 (molar ratio), achieving high NO<sub>x</sub> conversion even at lower temperature. Thus, the significance of NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation reaction in automotive exhaust purification is relevant and merits further research on novel catalyst formulations.

Noble metal based catalysts have been commonly employed in order to promote NO oxidation in automotive catalysis. How-

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ever, the use of noble metal (especially Pt) results in high cost and poor thermal stability under highly oxidative conditions [9]. In that sense, perovskites have attracted attention in recent years as potential, low-cost alternative to noble metal in oxidation processes [10]. In the perovskite lattice (with the general formula  $\text{ABO}_3$ ), the B cation coordinates with oxygen in octahedral structure, and A cation locates in the center of the dodecahedral structure. Perovskites activity for oxidation reactions seems to be related with some specific structural properties, such as change of oxidation state of B cation, active oxygen mobility and ion vacancy defect [11]. During oxidation reactions, lattice oxygen is thought to be catalytically active and its consumption and regeneration is relative to cycling the oxidation state of neighboring transition metal ions ( $\text{B}^{3+} \leftrightarrow \text{B}^{4+}$ ) and/or ( $\text{B}^{2+} \leftrightarrow \text{B}^{3+}$ ) [12]. In that sense, it has been reported that the catalytic activity of perovskites is far influenced by the type of B cation and its oxidation state cycling feasibility [13].

$\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites have been proposed as active perovskites for NO oxidation reactions [11,14]. In particular,  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskite is somewhat unusual in that  $\text{Mn}^{3+}/\text{Mn}^{4+}$  mixed oxidation state is usually observed even for nominal stoichiometry  $\text{LaMnO}_{3+\delta}$  (with  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  content of 2δ per formula unit), opposite to most other perovskites. However, it has been proposed that electroneutrality of the lattice is accomplished by generating cation vacancies, instead of oxygen over-stoichiometry, as perovskite lattice cannot accommodate interstitial oxygen ions [15,16]. On the other hand, stoichiometric  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite usually presents some oxygen deficiency in the lattice, represented by  $\text{LaCoO}_{3-\delta}$ , and the charge balance is accomplished by the presence of some cobalt as  $\text{Co}^{2+}$ . This  $\text{Mn}^{3+}/\text{Mn}^{4+}$  and  $\text{Co}^{2+}/\text{Co}^{3+}$  reversible oxidation state is thought to be a key factor for oxidation reactions [17–20].

The oxidation state of B cation can be modulated by varying preparation steps during the perovskite synthesis, such as calcination temperature [21], non-stoichiometry of cations A or B [12,14] or substituting  $\text{La}^{3+}$  by lower oxidation state cations, such as  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Ba}^{2+}$  or  $\text{Sr}^{2+}$ , or even higher oxidation state cation such as  $\text{Ce}^{4+}$ . Strontium-doped  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites have been used for a wide range of applications [10,22–24]. The introduction of lower oxidation state  $\text{Sr}^{2+}$  in substitution of  $\text{La}^{3+}$  in  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  lattice generates a net charge imbalance that may be compensated by alteration of the oxidation state of a fraction of transition metal, e.g.  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  or  $\text{Co}^{4+}$ . Alternatively, the oxidation state of transition metal could be maintained unaltered ( $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  or  $\text{Co}^{3+}$ ), but instead oxygen vacancies could be generated in the lattice to attain the charge balance. Even a mixed situation showing altered oxidation state of transition metal along with oxygen vacancies in the lattice could be expected.

Oxide-based catalysts have typically shown much lower activity than Pt-based catalysts under the kinetics-controlled temperature regime. However, Kim et al. [25] prepared  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites and reported NO oxidation activity similar to or higher than those of Pt-based catalysts under realistic automotive conditions. Li et al. [26] prepared a series of  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  ( $x=0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4$  and  $0.5$ ), and they found, after the  $\text{NO}_x$  storage tests, the  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$  perovskite had the best NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  performance and the largest  $\text{NO}_x$  storage capacity (NSC) at  $300^\circ\text{C}$ . These authors also suggested possible  $\text{NO}_x$  storage routes on  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$ . To our knowledge, a similar study of strontium-doped Mn-based perovskites has not been reported and results compared with those of Co-based perovskites.

More recently, Dong et al. [22] prepared a series of  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$  perovskite-type catalysts by the sol-gel method using citric acid as the complexant. They concluded that variation of synthesis conditions, namely the calefactive velocity, the calcination temperature and the pH of the precursor solutions, greatly affect the morphology of the perovskite catalyst and, consequently,

the NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  activity and  $\text{NO}_x$  storage capacity of  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$  perovskite-type catalysts.

In this work, we look deeply into the identification of the main changes in physico-chemical properties induced by the modification of different parameters (i.e. synthesis conditions or lanthanum partial substitution by strontium). Consequently, relevant information on the key factors for the NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation is extracted, along with the main differences derived from the chemical nature of B cation (Co or Mn) in the perovskite-based catalyst. This information would allow designing noble-metal-free catalysts competitive to substitute conventional Pt-containing NSR catalysts. We prepare, characterize and test NO oxidation activity of stoichiometric  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  as well as strontium doped  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  perovskites ( $x=0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4$  and  $0.5$ ). Firstly, the study focuses on the optimizing of the synthesis conditions during the sol-gel process to improve the oxidation capacity, including citrate to nitrate ratio, pH of the gel and calcination protocol to get pure perovskites with no phase segregation and enhanced textural properties; then special attention is focused on the correlation of NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  activity with the physico-chemical properties of the prepared strontium-doped perovskite-based catalysts.

## 2. Experimental

### 2.1. Perovskite catalyst preparation

All perovskites were prepared the by citric acid sol-gel method [27]. Appropriate amounts of  $\text{La}(\text{NO}_3)_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Fluka),  $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Sigma Aldrich),  $\text{Mn}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (Merck) were dissolved in distilled water under vigorous stirring. Then citric acid ( $\text{C}_6\text{H}_8\text{O}_7 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ , CA) was added as a complexing agent and organic loading for the combustion process with a citrate to nitrate (CA/N) molar ratios of 0.7, 1.1 or 1.5. The pH value was adjusted to 3, 4.5, 6, 7, 8 or 9 by ammonia (25% as  $\text{NH}_3$ , Panreac). After solvent evaporation at  $80^\circ\text{C}$ , the gel was further dried at  $120^\circ\text{C}$  overnight and then calcined in 5%  $\text{O}_2/\text{He}$  ( $60\text{ mL min}^{-1}$ ) or static air at desired temperature ( $600^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $700^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $800^\circ\text{C}$  or  $900^\circ\text{C}$ ) for 4 h. Table 1 resumes the nomenclature and synthesis conditions of all catalyst. The general nomenclature set for each sample was as follows:  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  (LCO) or  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  (LMO) with the specific synthesis conditions in brackets (citrate to nitrate molar ratio/pH/calcination temperature), as for example LCO (1.1/7/700). In order to determine if the synthesis method was repetitive this sample was prepared twice (with + in Table 1).

In order to synthesize strontium doped  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites, adequate amount of  $\text{Sr}(\text{NO}_3)_2$  (Sigma Aldrich) was added to the initial solution following the same procedure as stated before. The following samples with increasing La substitution degree by Sr were synthetized:  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{BO}_3$ ,  $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{BO}_3$ ,  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{BO}_3$ ,  $\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{BO}_3$ ,  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{BO}_3$ , with B = Mn or Co.

A Pt-based catalyst (1.5% Pt–15%  $\text{BaO}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ) was prepared as a reference by consecutive wetness impregnation. Firstly, a specific load of platinum (1.5%) was incorporated to the alumina support by dissolving the adequate amount of trettaammineplatinum (II) nitrate [ $\text{Pt}(\text{NH}_3)_4(\text{NO}_3)_2$ ] on distillate water. Then, the same process was repeated for barium incorporation (15%) using the adequate amount of barium acetate [ $\text{Ba}(\text{CH}_3\text{COO})_2$ ] as precursor. After each impregnation, the catalyst was calcined at  $500^\circ\text{C}$  for 4 h.

### 2.2. Catalyst characterization

X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were obtained on a Philips PW1710 diffractometer. The samples were finely ground and were

**Table 1**

Nomenclature, synthesis conditions and textural properties of the prepared  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites.

Perovskite	Nomenclature	CA/N	pH	T. Calc., °C	SSA, $\text{m}^2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$d_c$ , nm
$\text{LaCoO}_3$	LCO (0.7/7/700)	0.7	7	700	5.1	51
	LCO (1.1/7/700)	1.1	7	700	10.6	40
	LCO (1.5/7/700)	1.5	7	700	10.1	67
	LCO (1.1/3/700)	1.1	3	700	11.3	57
	LCO (1.1/4.5/700)	1.1	4.5	700	9.7	45
	LCO (1.1/6/700)	1.1	6	700	9.7	41
	LCO (1.1/8/700)	1.1	8	700	12.6	38
	LCO (1.1/9/700)	1.1	9	700	13.2 (15.2 <sup>a</sup> )	46 (34 <sup>a</sup> )
	LCO (1.1/7/600)	1.1	7	600	14.6	24
	LCO (1.1/7/700) <sup>a</sup>	1.1	7	700	11.0 (11.6 <sup>a</sup> )	41 (39 <sup>a</sup> )
$\text{LaMnO}_3$	LMO (1.1/4.5/700)	1.1	4.5	700	21.6	42
	LMO (1.1/6/600)	1.1	6	600	31.3	31
	LMO (1.1/6/700)	1.1	6	700	26.0	34
	LMO (1.1/7/700)	1.1	7	700	23.0	45
	LMO (1.1/8/700)	1.1	8	700	13.9	51

<sup>a</sup> Calcination in 5%  $\text{O}_2/\text{He}$  flow.

subjected to  $\text{Cu K}_{\alpha}$  radiation in a continuous scan mode from  $5^\circ$  to  $70^\circ 2\theta$  with  $0.02^\circ$  per second sampling interval. PANalytical X'pert HighScore specific software was used for data treatment.

Textural properties of the samples were determined by  $\text{N}_2$  adsorption-desorption at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  using Micromeritics TriStar equipment.

The thermogravimetric (TG) analysis was conducted with Setaram Setsys Evolution TG instrument coupled to the mass spectrometer Pfeiffer Vacuum DUO 2.5, using 10 mg of sample. The experiment was conducted in 5%  $\text{O}_2/\text{He}$  mixture or air ( $100 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$ ) from room temperature to  $950^\circ\text{C}$  at a heating rate of  $2^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$ .

The reducibility of the samples was investigated by temperature programmed reduction ( $\text{H}_2$ -TPR) using Micromeritics AutoChem II equipment. The quartz tube reactor was loaded with 0.1 g of sample and pretreated with  $30 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  of 5%  $\text{O}_2/\text{He}$  mixture at  $600^\circ\text{C}$  for 30 min, and then cooled down to  $50^\circ\text{C}$ . Afterwards, samples were heated from room temperature to  $900^\circ\text{C}$  with  $10^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$  heating rate in a 5%  $\text{H}_2/\text{Ar}$  gas mixture with  $30 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  flowrate. Water generated during sample reduction was removed using a cold trap before gas analysis by TCD.

The strength and concentration of different oxygen species was investigated by Oxygen temperature programmed desorption ( $\text{O}_2$ -TPD) using Micromeritics AutoChem II equipment. The sample (0.1 g) was introduced in a quartz tube reactor and pretreated with  $50 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  of 5%  $\text{O}_2/\text{He}$  mixture at  $600^\circ\text{C}$  for 5 min and then cooled down to  $40^\circ\text{C}$ . Afterwards, samples were heated from room temperature to  $900^\circ\text{C}$  with a heating rate of  $10^\circ\text{C min}^{-1}$  in a  $50 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  of Helium gas flow.

X-ray photoelectronic spectroscopy (XPS) characterization was carried out in a SPECS electron spectrometer with a Phoibos 150 1D-DLD energy analyzer using Al-K $\alpha$  (1486.7 eV) radiation source. To obtain the XPS spectra, the pressure of the analysis chamber was maintained at  $5 \times 10^{-10}$  mbar. The binding energy (BE) scale was adjusted by setting the C 1s transition at 284.6 eV.

### 2.3. NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation experiments

Oxidation tests were carried out in a vertical stainless steel reactor filled with 0.5 grams of 0.3–0.5 mm pelletized catalyst, and placed inside a 3-zone tube furnace. The feed composition was 650 ppm of NO, 6% O<sub>2</sub> and Ar as balance gas. Gases were feed via mass flow controllers and the total flow rate was set at

$634 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$ , which corresponded to a space velocity (GHSV) of  $123,500 \text{ h}^{-1}$ . Temperature was measured by a thermocouple inside the catalyst bed.

The outlet gas composition was continuously measured using a MKS MultiGas 2030 FT-IR analyzer for quantitative analysis of NO and NO<sub>2</sub> (no additional nitrogen compounds are detected). The conversion of NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> was calculated after steady state at even temperature was reached, which usually needed around 20 min after temperature stabilization, according to Eq. (1):

$$X_{\text{NO-to-NO}_2}(\%) = \frac{F_{\text{NO}}^{\text{in}} - F_{\text{NO}}^{\text{out}}}{F_{\text{NO}}^{\text{in}}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Preparation, characterization and NO oxidation activity of $\text{LaCoO}_3$ and $\text{LaMnO}_3$ perovskites

There are several parameters affecting perovskites physico-chemical properties during the synthesis, such as citrate to nitrate molar ratio in the starting solution, pH value of the gel and calcination protocol [22,28–30]. The influence of the preparation procedure on the physico-chemical properties on  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites was analyzed by thermogravimetric analysis (Fig. S1), X-ray diffraction (Figs. S2 and S3), temperature programmed hydrogen reduction (Fig. S4) and textural properties. The main characterization results of the prepared catalysts are summarized in Table 1.

The influence of citrate to nitrate ratio (CA/N) was studied by preparing  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite with a citrate to nitrate molar ratio of 0.7, 1.1 and 1.5 (first section in Table 1), i.e. defect, near stoichiometric and excess of citrate for the stoichiometric reaction with nitrates, respectively. As can be observed in Table 1, surface area is penalized ( $5.1 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) for low CA/N ratios due to a rapid rate of reaction during combustion, or abrupt weight loss as determined by TGA (Fig. S1), which causes an important temperature increase and promotes crystal growth (51 nm). A more progressive combustion obtained with 1.1 CA/N ratio increases surface area up to  $10.6 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  while limits crystal size (40 nm) and phase segregations (Fig. S2). However, this trend is not observed for perovskites prepared with higher CA/N ratios, leading to a surface area of  $10.1 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and a crystal size of 67 nm (CA/N = 1.5). More details can be found in the supplementary material.

The influence of the pH of the gel was also studied during the synthesis procedure of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  crystalline structure. Six perovskites were prepared adjusting the pH of the gel to 3, 4.5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 by ammonia addition LCO (1.1/3, 4.5, 6, 7, 8 or 9/700). Almost irrelevant influence in XRD patterns (not shown) as well as in textural properties is observed (second section in [Table 1](#)).

Finally, the influence of the calcination protocol was studied by calcining perovskites gels at 600, 700, 800 and 900 °C (LCO (1.1/7/600, 700, 800 or 900), third section in [Table 1](#)). Pure perovskite phase with no impurities or segregation was observed by XRD (Fig. S3) for calcination temperatures above 700 °C. On the contrary, the sample calcined at 600 °C presented characteristic diffraction peaks attributed to  $\text{La}(\text{OH})_3$  along with those corresponding to perovskite. As could be expected, inversely proportional relation was observed between crystal size and surface area. The highest surface area ( $14.6 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) corresponds to the smallest crystal size (24 nm) for a calcination temperature of 600 °C whereas the lowest surface area ( $4.3 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) corresponds to the larger crystal size (212 nm) for a calcination temperature of 900 °C ([Table 1](#)). No significant differences were observed in the samples apart from a displacement to lower temperatures of reduction peaks with lower calcinations temperatures (Fig. S4).

[Fig. 1](#) shows the NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  conversion (Eq. (1)) with increasing temperature for the prepared  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites. The equilibrium conversion for the studied gas stream-feed composition (650 ppm NO, 6% O<sub>2</sub> and Ar to balance) with temperature is also included in broken line as a reference. Differences in the catalytic behavior for the NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation among prepared perovskites can be almost exclusively linked to the surface area and the presence/absence of impurities, as no significant differences have been observed by other characterization techniques such as H<sub>2</sub>-TPR (Fig. S4). Qualitatively, similar trends of NO conversion have been observed for all prepared samples, i.e. increasing NO conversion due to the promotion of oxidation kinetic constant with temperature, maximum NO conversion at intermediate temperatures and decreasing NO conversion in a thermodynamically controlled regime due to the exothermicity of the reaction. As can be observed in [Fig. 1a](#), NO conversion with LCO (0.7/7/700), resulted in significantly lower values in the whole temperature range with respect to its counterparts LCO (1.1/7/700) and LCO (1.5/7/700), prepared with higher citric acid to nitrates molar ratios (CA/N). NO conversion penalization was directly linked to lower surface area and the presence of segregated phases such as cobalt oxide ( $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$ ), lanthanum oxide ( $\text{La}_2\text{O}_3$ ) and lanthanum hydroxide ( $\text{La}(\text{OH})_3$ ), as revealed by XRD (Fig. S2). [Fig. 1b](#) shows that irrespective of the pH of the gel the NO conversion of the resultant perovskites was almost similar, in agreement with similar surface area values and

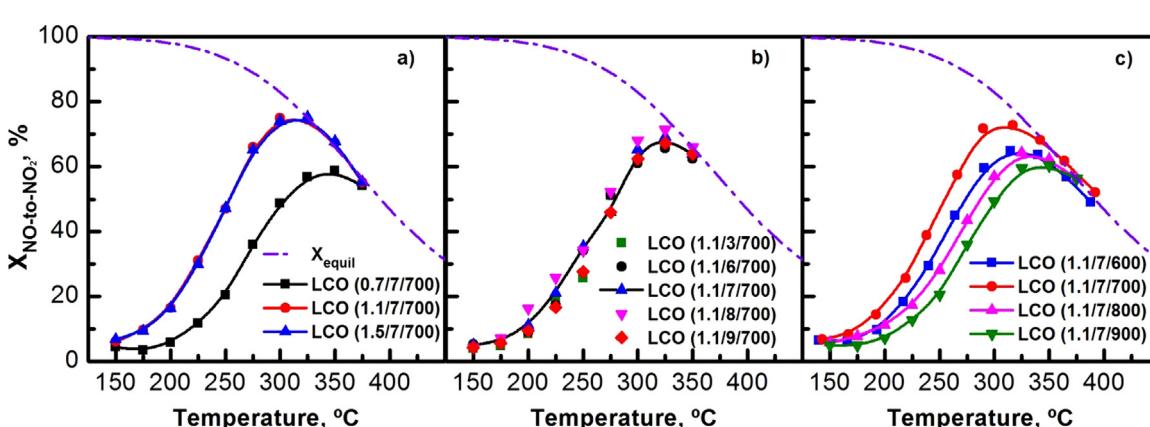
the absence of impurities already reported. Finally, [Fig. 1c](#) makes evident that a calcination temperature of 700 °C promotes NO conversion, achieving a maximum value of 77% at 300–350 °C. NO conversion is penalized for lower and higher calcination temperatures, due to the presence of impurities and surface area diminution, respectively.

In summary, optimum preparation procedure of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites requires near stoichiometric citrate to nitrate ratio in the starting solution for a progressive decomposition, a pH of the gel of 8 (although its impact is almost irrelevant) and calcination temperatures of 700 °C in order to avoid impurities but with low surface area penalization. Finally, it was also observed that the calcination procedure also affects the physico-chemical properties of the perovskites. LCO (1.1/9/700) sample, calcined in a fixed bed reactor with  $60 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  of 5% O<sub>2</sub>/He gas stream, increases the surface area ( $15.2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) with respect to LCO (1.1/9/700) sample ( $13.2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) calcined in static air. This could be related to a higher capacity to purge released gases and remove excess reaction heat avoiding hot spots and limiting crystal growth. Thus, for Sr doped perovskites preparations calcinations in fixed bed reactor with  $60 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  5% O<sub>2</sub>/He gas stream was defined as the standard calcination protocol.

A similar study was performed with  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites determining that optimum preparation procedure involves the formula LMO (1.1/6/600), i.e. i) near stoichiometric citrate to nitrate molar ratio (CA/N = 1.1), similar to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite; ii) pH value of the gel adjusted to 6. As opposite to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites, the pH of the gel has a notable impact in the specific surface area and crystal size ([Table 1](#)) of the prepared solids; iii) calcination temperature of 600 °C, it was possible to decrease calcination temperature with respect to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites without presence of impurities.

Thus, it can be concluded that optimal preparation conditions for  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  differ from those reported previously by Dong et al. [22]. On the one hand, the effect of the pH of the precursor solution for Mn perovskites is confirmed, although the calcination temperature can be significantly decreased. On the other hand, in the present study, the optimum pH value of the solution precursor results in 6 instead of pH = 8 reported by Dong et al. [22].

The oxidation capacity of NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites prepared by optimum procedure, can be observed in [Fig. 2](#).  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskite presented higher NO conversion with respect to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  at low temperature ( $T < 250$  °C), in line with higher exposed surface area of  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  ( $26.0 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) with respect to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  ( $11.0 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ). However, at higher temperature ( $T > 250$  °C) similar or even slightly higher NO conversion is observed for  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite, suggesting higher intrinsic activity in comparison to  $\text{LaMnO}_3$ . For temperatures higher than 325 °C, the

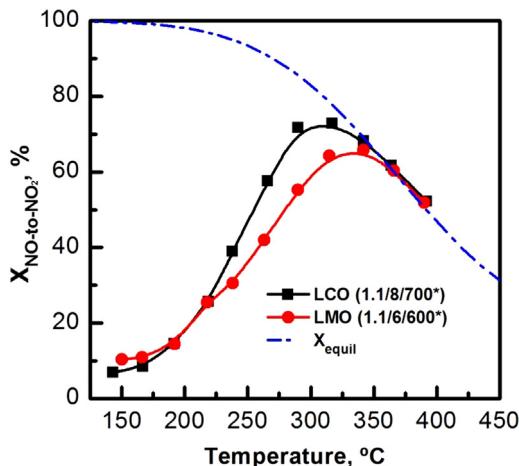


**Fig. 1.** NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation capacity of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites prepared with different synthesis conditions: (a) citric acid to nitrate molar ratios (CA/N = 0.7, 1.1 and 1.5), (b) pH values of the gel (pH = 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9) and (c) calcination temperature (Temp. = 600, 700, 800, 900 °C).

**Table 2**

NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation conversions and reaction rates of  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites in a differential reactor.

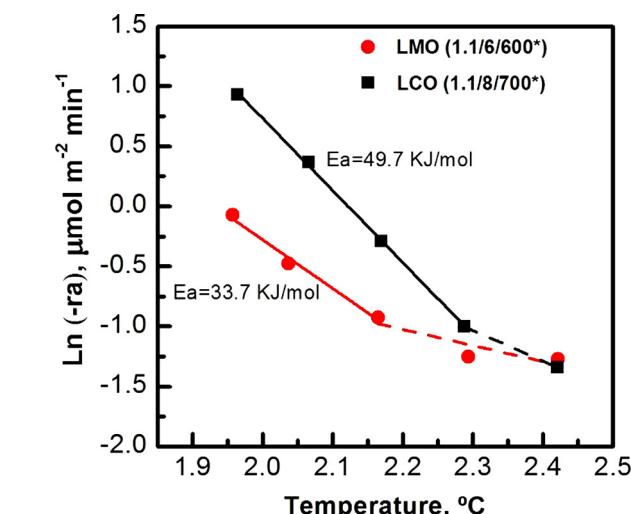
$\text{LaCoO}_3$ (LCO 1.1/8/700 5% O <sub>2</sub> /He)			$\text{LaMnO}_3$ (LMO 1.1/6/600 5% O <sub>2</sub> /He)		
Temperature, °C	$X_{\text{NO-to-NO}_2}$ , %	( $-r_A$ ), $\mu\text{mol min}^{-1} \text{m}^{-2}$	Temperature, °C	$X_{\text{NO-to-NO}_2}$ , %	( $-r_A$ ), $\mu\text{mol min}^{-1} \text{m}^{-2}$
140	2.64	0.260	140	5.74	0.281
164	3.72	0.367	163	5.85	0.286
188	7.56	0.746	189	8.10	0.396
211	14.57	1.437	218	12.71	0.621
236	25.65	2.531	238	19.01	0.929



**Fig. 2.** NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation capacity of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites prepared by optimal synthesis conditions.

activity of both catalysts decreased in line with the thermodynamic equilibrium.

A kinetic study performed under differential reactor conditions ( $X_A < 15\%$ ) in the absence of mass transfer limitations (total flow rate  $> 1500 \text{ mL min}^{-1}$  and particle size  $< 0.5 \text{ mm}$ , Fig. S5) allowed us calculating reaction rates normalized to exposed surface area unit ( $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{ min}^{-1}$ ). Table 2 confirms higher intrinsic activity of  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  with respect to  $\text{LaMnO}_3$ . The activation energy for the NO oxidation reaction over  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  and  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites are determined from Fig. 3, which represents a logarithmic plot of the reaction rate as a function of the inverse of temperature. Apparent activation energies result in 33.7 and 49.7 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup> for LMO (1.1/6/600 in 5% O<sub>2</sub>/He) and LCO (1.1/8/700 in 5% O<sub>2</sub>/He), respec-



**Fig. 3.** Linearization of Arrhenius equation in order to obtain activation energies of NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  reaction over  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites.

**Table 3**

Textural properties of  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites, with  $x$  from 0 to 0.5.

Sample	Surface area, $\text{m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$	$V_p$ , $\text{cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1}$	$d_c$ , nm
$\text{LaCoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	16.2	0.09	32
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{CoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	17.2	0.09	27
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	21.4	0.11	18
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	20.3	0.12	18
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{CoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	18.8	0.11	16
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$ <sup>a</sup>	15.7	0.09	15
$\text{LaMnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	28.2	0.14	27
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	33.1	0.17	21
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{MnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	35.8	0.18	20
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	39.1	0.17	15
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{MnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	47.9	0.19	15
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{MnO}_3$ <sup>b</sup>	39.6	0.16	14

<sup>a</sup> All samples synthesized under same conditions that LCO (1.1/8/700).

<sup>b</sup> All samples synthesized under same conditions that LMO (1.1/6/600).

tively, except for lower temperatures (broken lines) suggesting probably that at so lower temperatures (below 190 °C for LMO and 165 °C for LCO) external diffusion could not be completely ruled out. Chen et al. [14] reported a value of  $44.8 \pm 2.7 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for  $\text{La}_x\text{MnO}_3$  ( $0.9 < x < 1.1$ ) in the range 200–275 °C and Qi et al. [31] a value of  $31.0 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  in the range 175–225 °C. For  $\text{LaCoO}_3$ , Choi et al. [32] found  $55.4 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite between 190 and 220 °C.

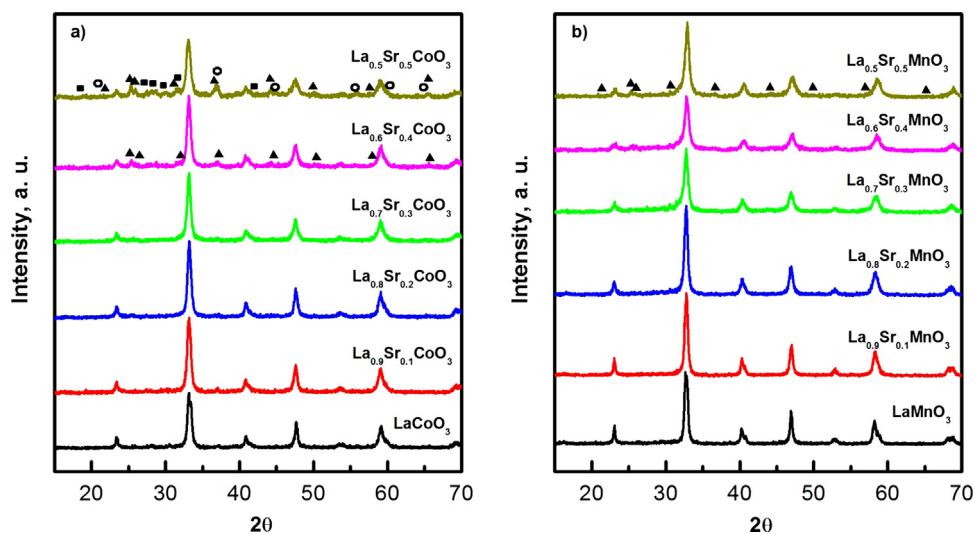
### 3.2. Strontium doped $\text{LaCoO}_3$ and $\text{LaMnO}_3$ perovskites

The cations in the perovskite lattice can be partially replaced by foreign cations with no large change in crystalline structure, producing substituted perovskites, i.e.  $\text{A}_{1-x}\text{A}'_x\text{BO}_3$  or  $\text{AB}_{1-x}\text{B}'_x\text{O}_3$ . This property has frequently been exploited in catalysis because the substitution of foreign cations in A and/or B sites usually promotes catalytic activity [10].

In order to determine the influence of strontium doping,  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{BO}_3$  perovskites (B=Mn or Co) were synthesized with La substitutions  $x=0, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4$  and 0.5, using  $\text{Sr}(\text{NO}_3)_2$  as precursor, and the optimum synthesis procedure determined in the previous section.

#### 3.2.1. X-ray diffraction (XRD)

Fig. 4 shows the XRD patterns of the prepared  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  (Fig. 4a) and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  (Fig. 4b) perovskites. Pure perovskite diffraction patterns were obtained for low Sr substitution degrees, in the absence of impurities. However, phase segregation in the form of  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$ ,  $\text{La}(\text{OH})_3$  and  $\text{SrCO}_3$  start to be detectable by XRD for  $\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{CoO}_3$  perovskite, and become even more significant for  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$ . On the other hand, in the case of Mn-based perovskites, the presence of impurities in the form of  $\text{SrCO}_3$  was only evident for the highest Sr substituted sample, i.e.  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Mn}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$ . Thus, it can be concluded that  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites allow higher Sr accommodation in the lattice without phase segregation in comparison to  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites.



**Fig. 4.** XRD diffractograms of (a)  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  and (b)  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  with  $x$  ranging from 0 to 0.5 ( $\blacktriangle$   $\text{SrCO}_3$ ,  $\blacksquare$   $\text{La(OH)}_3$  and  $\circlearrowleft$   $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$ ).

**Table 4**

Deconvoluted hydrogen consumption related to different reduction steps for  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  perovskites, with  $x$  from 0 to 0.5.

Sample	$\text{H}_2/\text{Co}$	$\text{O}_2 \text{chem}^{\text{a}}$ , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Co}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^{2+}{}^{\text{b}}$ , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Co}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^0{}^{\text{c}}$ , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Co}^{3+}/\text{Co}^{\text{d}}$
$\text{LaCoO}_3$	1.53	136.33	2019.23	3938.58	0.98
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{CoO}_3$	1.55	360.17	2012.11	4142.19	1.03
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CoO}_3$	1.53	404.02	2085.18	4230.39	1.01
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$	1.49	627.78	2038.51	3985.23	0.98
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{CoO}_3$	1.38	578.98	1984.67	2438.72	0.61
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$	1.34	611.33	1879.61	2253.11	0.60

<sup>a</sup> Integration of peak centered around 225 °C.

<sup>b</sup> Integration of peaks centered around 350 °C.

<sup>c</sup> Sum of integrated peaks centered around 500, 575 and 650 °C.

<sup>d</sup> Estimation of relative  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  content based on deconvoluted peak areas relation,  $\text{Co}^{3+}/\text{Co} = (\text{Co}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^{2+})/(\text{Co}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^0)/2$ .

Irrespective of B cation, Mn or Co, increasing Sr substitution degree leads to a widening of the diffraction peaks (Fig. S6) due to smaller crystal size of the solids, which has been quantified by Scherrer's equation (Table 3). In fact, the largest crystal size, 32 and 27 nm, is detected for the non-substituted  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  samples, respectively, and the smallest, 15 and 14 nm, for the highest substitution degree  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{MnO}_3$ , respectively.

Furthermore, the intensity decrease of the diffraction peaks with the displacement towards higher diffraction angles by Sr doping, suggests that  $\text{La}^{3+}$  cations were successfully substituted by  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  or by  $\text{Mn}^{3+}/\text{Mn}^{4+}$  in the perovskite lattice structure. In addition, gradual changes in the characteristic pattern are observed from rhombohedral  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  (PDF number: 048-0123) and  $\text{La}_{0.88}\text{MnO}_{2.91}$  (PDF number: 089-0679) to rhombohedral distorted  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_{2.91}$  (PDF number: 048-0122) and rhombohedral  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{MnO}_3$  (PDF number: 048-0122), respectively [10,33–35].

### 3.2.2. Textural properties

The influence of Sr content on textural properties was studied by  $\text{N}_2$  adsorption-desorption at low temperature (Table 3). The evolution of the specific surface area (SSA) with respect to the substitution degree reveals a maximum for  $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{MnO}_3$ , samples. The SSA is enhanced by 32% for  $\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CoO}_3$  ( $21.4 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) with respect to the non-substituted sample ( $16.2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) whereas the SSA enhancement was notably higher (70%) for  $\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{MnO}_3$  ( $47.9 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) in comparison to the non-substituted sample ( $28.2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ). The SSA development for Sr substituted samples can be directly linked to the lower crystal

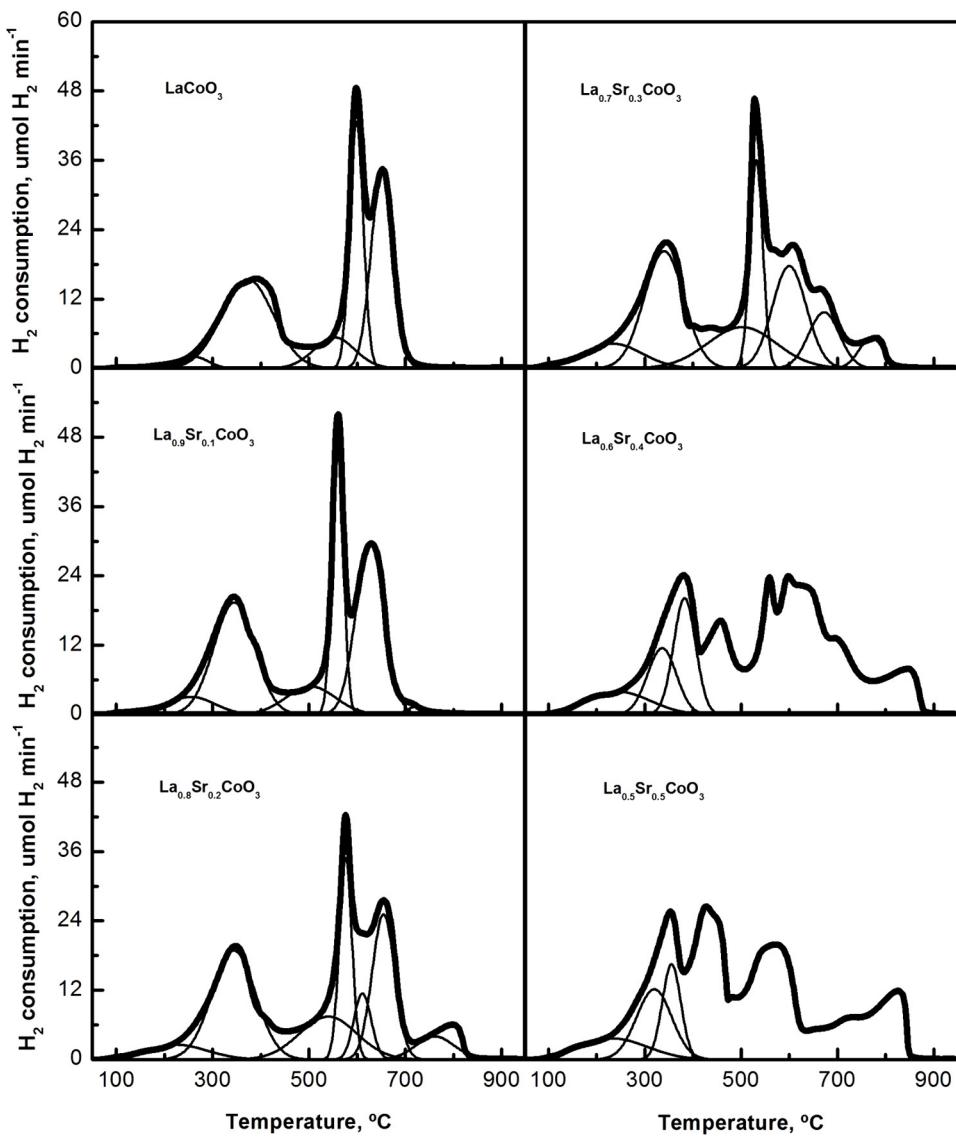
size of the samples, as it was revealed by XRD (Table 3). Although crystal size was further decreased for higher Sr substitution, SSA was penalized, which was attributed to the presence of phase segregations that may block the access to the pores [26]. Note that this SSA penalization resulted evident for Sr substitutions higher than 0.3 and 0.4 for  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  and  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites, respectively, which again is a clear evidence of the higher ability of  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  to accommodate Sr in the lattice with no phase segregation, and thus allowing higher promotion effect on textural properties due to Sr incorporation.

### 3.2.3. Reducibility ( $\text{H}_2\text{-TPR}$ )

It has been found that the catalytic activities of lanthanum perovskites were mainly determined by the B site element properties [20]. In this sense, the redox properties of Mn and Co-based perovskites were investigated by  $\text{H}_2\text{-TPR}$  experiments. Fig. 5 illustrates the  $\text{H}_2\text{-TPR}$  for  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  samples, where two main  $\text{H}_2$  consumption regions can be distinguished, i.e. below and above 500 °C. Hydrogen consumption below 500 °C can be deconvoluted into two different contributions centered around 225 and 350 °C, which are assigned to the reduction of quimisorbed oxygen in the catalyst surface and the progressive reduction of  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Co}^{2+}$  from the surface to the inner layers with increasing temperature, respectively, maintaining the perovskite structure,

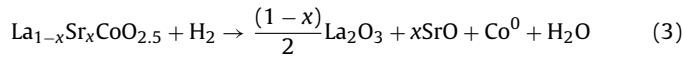


On the other hand, hydrogen consumption above 500 °C can be assigned to the final reduction of  $\text{Co}^{2+}$  to  $\text{Co}^0$  which is accomplished in two different consumption peaks attributed to superficial



**Fig. 5.**  $\text{H}_2$ -TPR profiles of  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  samples with  $x$  ranging from 0 to 0.5.

and bulk reduction, resulting in the destruction of the perovskite structure,



The aforementioned reduction peaks can be clearly observed for perovskite samples with low Sr substitution up to  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$ . In contrast, reduction peak assignation is not straightforward for higher Sr substitution degree samples. In those cases, an additional reduction peak can be observed at higher temperature ( $800^\circ\text{C}$ ) which is not related with hydrogen consumption but instead is ascribed to surface decomposition of residual carbonates in the form of  $\text{CO}_2$  which alters the TCD signal, as detected by MS [26,36]. As a general trend, it can be observed that increasing Sr content results in the displacement of reduction peaks to lower temperature, related with increasing BET surface area (SSA) which promotes sample reducibility.

Focusing on low Sr substituted samples, the total hydrogen consumption related to the total amount of cobalt in the sample (Table 4) can be used to estimate the mean oxidation state of cobalt. Perovskite reduction stoichiometry (Eqs. (2) and (3)) reveals that 1.5 mol of  $\text{H}_2$  is needed to reduce 1 mol of  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Co}^0$ . Calculated  $\text{H}_2/\text{Co}$  ratios are in all cases close to 1.5, this confirming an oxida-

tion state of  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  in the initial perovskite and discard the presence of  $\text{Co}^{4+}$ . Consequently, it can be deduced that generation of oxygen vacancies is the only mechanism available to accomplish charge compensation in  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites when strontium is doped into the structure. In fact, increasing  $\text{H}_2$  consumption due to reduction of chemisorbed oxygen in surface vacancies was observed with increasing Sr doping (Table 4), reaching this contribution about 5 times for  $\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$  with respect to non-substituted  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskite. Furthermore, it was experimentally verified that the amount of hydrogen consumed in the reduction of  $\text{Co}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^{2+}$  was half of that consumed for the reduction of  $\text{Co}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^0$ , which validates the peak deconvolution assignments.  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  relative content with respect to total cobalt in the sample was calculated from deconvoluted peaks areas relation, i.e. dividing the  $\text{H}_2$  consumption related to  $\text{Co}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^{2+}$  reduction by half the  $\text{H}_2$  consumption related to  $\text{Co}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Co}^0$  reduction. It can be observed that cobalt exists only in the 3+ oxidation state in the perovskite lattice for low Sr substituted samples. On the contrary, for high Sr substituted samples ( $\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$ ) lower  $\text{Co}^{3+}/\text{Co}$  ratios were observed. This fact can be explained by the presence of a significant amount of cobalt as  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  (not included when calculating  $\text{H}_2$  consumption to reduce  $\text{Co}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Co}^0$ ), as observed by

**Table 5**

Deconvoluted hydrogen consumption related to different reduction steps for  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites, with  $x$  from 0 to 0.5.

Sample	$\text{H}_2/\text{Mn}$	$\text{O}_{\text{chem}}^{\text{a}}$ , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Mn}^{4+} \rightarrow \text{Mn}^{3+}$ <sup>b</sup> , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Mn}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Mn}^{2+}$ (superficial) <sup>c</sup> , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Mn}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Mn}^{2+}$ (bulk) <sup>d</sup> , $\mu\text{mol H}_2 \text{g}^{-1}$	$\text{Mn}^{4+}/\text{Mn}^{\text{e}}$
$\text{LaMnO}_3$	0.80	148	724	606	1967	0.28
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$	0.70	155	522	707	1746	0.21
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{MnO}_3$	0.70	142	642	908	1492	0.27
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$	0.71	158	879	1099	1002	0.42
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{MnO}_3$	0.65	135	913	815	1151	0.43
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{MnO}_3$	0.70	194	990	1022	1204	0.44

<sup>a</sup> Integration of peak centered around 175 °C.

<sup>b</sup> Integrated peak centered around 300 °C.

<sup>c</sup> Integrated peak centered around 425 °C.

<sup>d</sup> Sum of integrated peaks centered around 600, 750 and 825 °C.

<sup>e</sup> Estimation of relative  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  content based on deconvoluted peak areas relation.  $\text{Mn}^{4+}/\text{Mn} = (\text{Mn}^{4+} \rightarrow \text{Mn}^{3+})/(\text{Mn}^{3+} \rightarrow \text{Mn}^{2+}$ , superficial + bulk).

**Table 6**

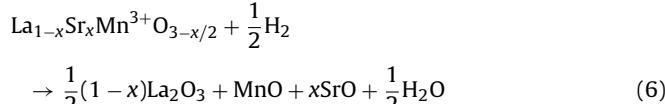
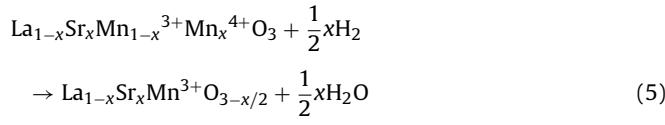
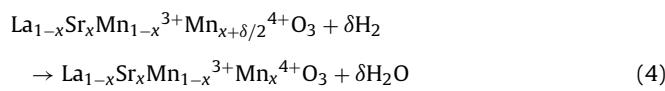
Surface atomic ratios of different compounds in  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites with  $x$  from 0 to 0.5.

Sample	$\text{Sr}/(\text{Co or Mn})$	$\text{La}/(\text{Co or Mn})$	$\text{Sr}_{\text{segregated}}/\text{Sr}_{\text{total}}$	$\text{O}_{\text{lattice}}/\text{O}_{\text{total}}$
$\text{LaCoO}_3$	0.00 (0.00)	2.00 (1.00)	–	0.41
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{CoO}_3$	0.34 (0.10)	1.54 (0.90)	0.56	0.41
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{CoO}_3$	0.52 (0.20)	1.43 (0.80)	0.63	0.36
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$	0.68 (0.30)	1.37 (0.70)	0.72	0.32
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{CoO}_3$	0.70 (0.40)	0.78 (0.60)	0.75	0.35
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{CoO}_3$	1.13 (0.50)	0.82 (0.50)	0.84	0.28
$\text{LaMnO}_3$	0.00 (0.00)	1.40 (1.00)	–	0.52
$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$	0.23 (0.10)	1.38 (0.90)	0.35	0.49
$\text{La}_{0.8}\text{Sr}_{0.2}\text{MnO}_3$	0.40 (0.20)	1.36 (0.80)	0.33	0.46
$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$	0.52 (0.30)	0.85 (0.70)	0.34	0.48
$\text{La}_{0.6}\text{Sr}_{0.4}\text{MnO}_3$	0.62 (0.40)	0.84 (0.60)	0.35	0.44
$\text{La}_{0.5}\text{Sr}_{0.5}\text{MnO}_3$	0.82 (0.50)	0.68 (0.50)	0.34	0.44

In brackets are shown theoretical values based on nominal composition.

XRD. The presence of a well dispersed  $\text{Co}_3\text{O}_4$  phase also induces some changes in the  $\text{H}_2$ -TPR experiments. In fact, the dispersed cobalt oxide is reduced around 200 °C, increasing the peak previously assigned to the reduction of quimisorbed oxygen on the surface.

Fig. 6 shows TPR profiles of Mn perovskites, all curves exhibiting similar shapes with two main reduction peaks, below and above 550 °C.  $\text{H}_2$  consumption below 550 °C was deconvoluted into three contributions located at 175, 300 and 425 °C, which are ascribed to the reduction of nonstoichiometric excess oxygen accommodated within the lattice, reduction of  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  and reduction of  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  located in a coordination unsaturated microenvironment [22,37,38], respectively. Theoretically, same contents of  $\text{Sr}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  are expected in the perovskite structure in order to accomplish charge balance. Furthermore, it has been reported that even stoichiometric  $\text{LaMnO}_3$  perovskites can show mixed  $\text{Mn}^{3+}/\text{Mn}^{4+}$  oxidation state balanced by excess oxygen in the lattice. Thus, reduction sequence of  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  perovskites can be written as:



where  $x$  represents the Sr molar fraction and  $\delta$  the excess of oxygen accommodated within the lattice. On the other hand,  $\text{H}_2$  consumption above 550 °C was attributed to bulk reduction of

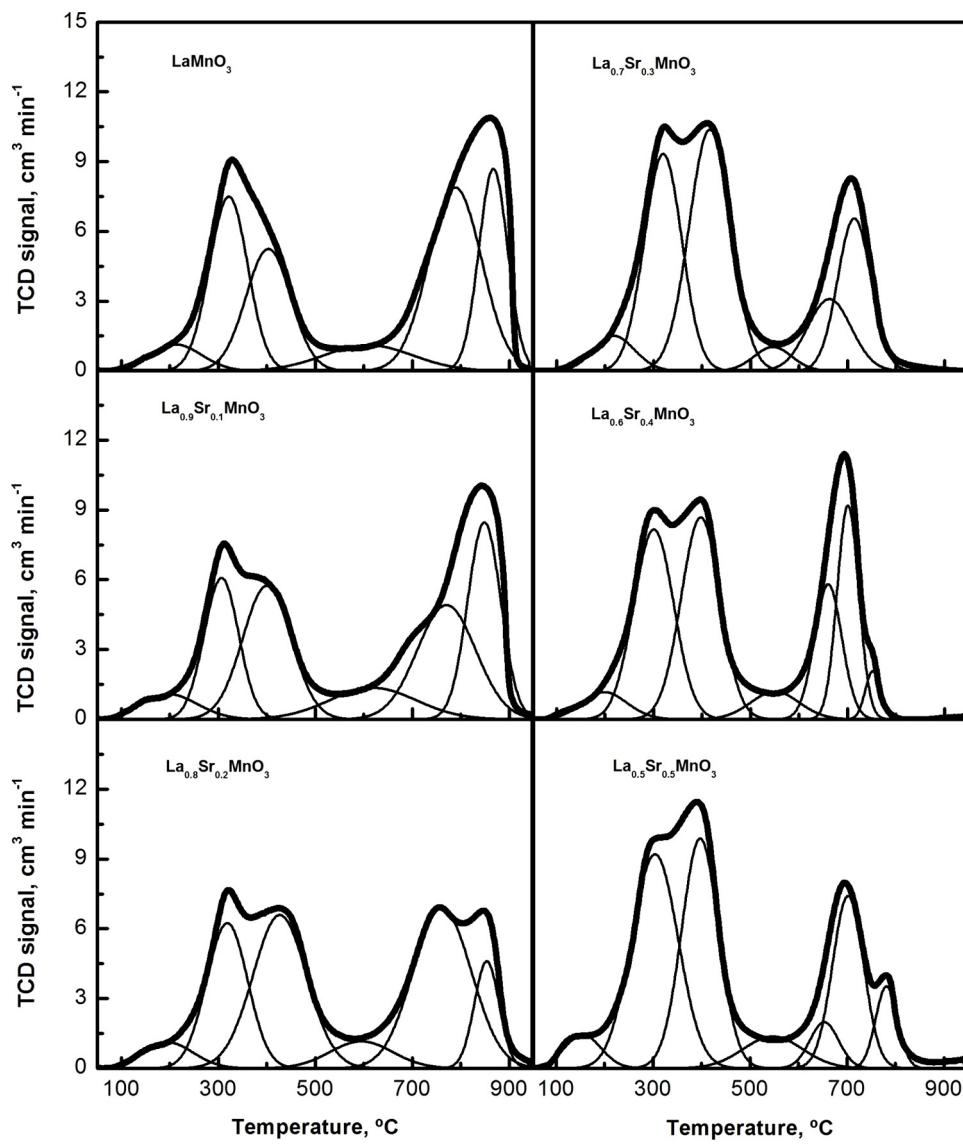
$\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  and destruction of the perovskite. As previously observed for  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites, an additional peak was observed at higher temperature (800 °C) for high Sr substituted samples due to  $\text{SrCO}_3$  decomposition.

Total  $\text{H}_2$  consumption related to Mn content in the sample ( $\text{H}_2/\text{Mn}$ ) is indicative of an average Mn oxidation state. 1 mol of  $\text{H}_2$  is needed to reduce 1 mol of  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  whereas 0.5 moles of  $\text{H}_2$  is needed to reduce 1 mol of  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ . Calculated  $\text{H}_2/\text{Mn}$  ratios resulted in between 0.5 and 1 for all samples, revealing a hybrid  $\text{Mn}^{4+}/\text{Mn}^{3+}$  oxidation state (Table 5). Observing numerical values of deconvoluted and integrated signals, it can be observed that  $\text{H}_2$  consumption related to reduction of oxygen excess is maintained fairly constant with Sr doping. The observed increasing amount of  $\text{H}_2$  consumption is attributed to reduction of  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$ , revealing that Sr doping promotes the presence of  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  in the perovskite structure to compensate the charge imbalance produced by Sr. A similar trend observed for  $\text{H}_2$  consumption is assigned to superficial reduction of  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ , which correlates adequately with increasing surface area of the samples. Reduction of bulk  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  is complementary to surface  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  reduction. Thus,  $\text{H}_2$  consumption related to bulk reduction of  $\text{Mn}^{3+}$  to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  decrease with Sr doping.  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  content determined from integrated  $\text{H}_2$  consumption of deconvoluted signals show, as a general trend, an increasing content of  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  with increasing Sr doping, obtaining almost 50% of manganese as  $\text{Mn}^{4+}$  for high Sr doped perovskites.

As a general trend it can be observed that increasing Sr content results in a displacement of reduction peaks to lower temperature, related with an increasing BET surface area (SSA) which promotes sample reducibility, as it was observed for  $\text{LaCoO}_3$  perovskites.

### 3.2.4. Concentration and strength of the oxygen species ( $\text{O}_2$ -TPD)

Partial substitution of  $\text{La}^{3+}$  by  $\text{Sr}^{2+}$  can modify Co or Mn oxidation state as previously observed by  $\text{H}_2$ -TPR, but oxygen vacancies can be also promoted in order to accomplished charge compensation.



**Fig. 6.**  $\text{H}_2$ -TPR profiles of  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  samples with  $x$  ranging from 0 to 0.5.

**Table 7**

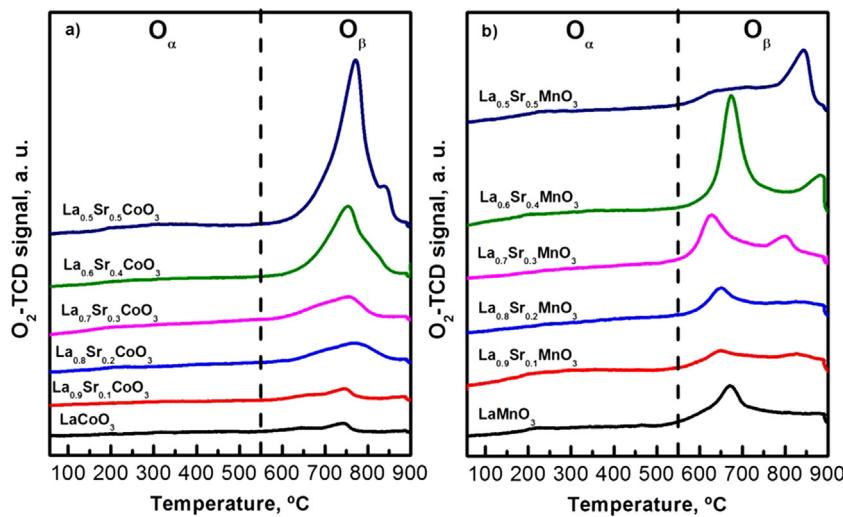
NO-to- $\text{NO}_2$  oxidation activity of different perovskite formulations reported in the literature, under different reaction conditions, in comparison to  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  prepared in this work.

Type	Formulation	Shape	Feedstream	GHSV, $\text{h}^{-1}$	$T, ^\circ\text{C}$	$X_{\text{NO-to-NO}_2}, \%$	Reference
Co-based perovskites	$\text{LaCoO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 100 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 10%	30,000	260	83.0	Chen et al. [11]
	$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{CoO}_3$	Monolith	[NO] = 400 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 8%	30,000	300	86.0	Kim et al. [25]
	$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 800 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 5%	80,000	300	74.1	Li et al. [26]
	$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{Co}_{0.8}\text{Fe}_{0.2}\text{O}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 750 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 5%	80,000	300	84.6	Ma et al. [55]
	$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{CoO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 650 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 6%	123,500	300	82.5	This work
Mn-based perovskites	$\text{LaMnO}_3$	Monolith	[NO] = 400 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 8%	30,000	350	62.0	Qi et al. [31]
	$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{MnO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 100 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 10% <sup>a</sup>	30,000	296	85.0	Chen et al. [14]
	$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$	Monolith	[NO] = 400 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 8%	30,000	350	62.5	Kim et al. [25]
	$\text{La}_{0.7}\text{Sr}_{0.3}\text{MnO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 800 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 5%	80,000	350	70.2	Dong et al. [22]
	$\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{MnO}_3$	Powder	[NO] = 650 ppm; $[\text{O}_2]$ = 6%	123,500	350	64.9	This work

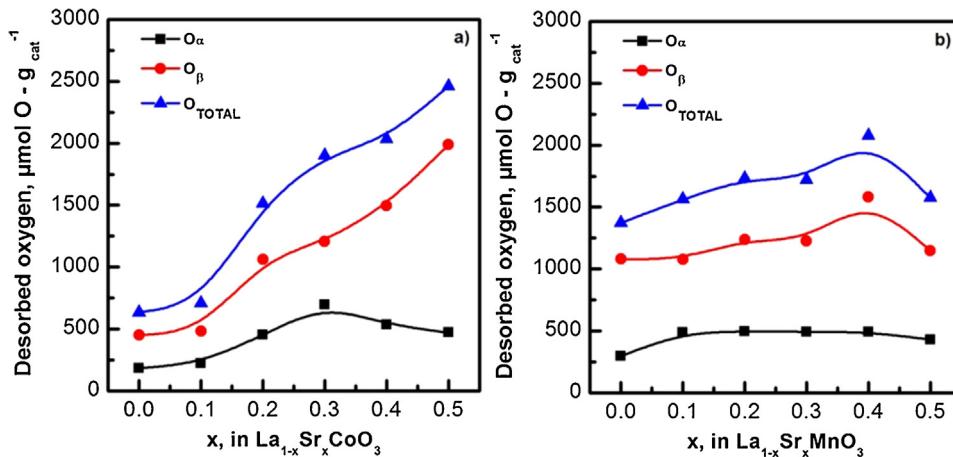
<sup>a</sup> In the presence of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{CO}_2$ .

In this sense, temperature programmed desorption of oxygen ( $\text{O}_2$ -TPD) is a reliable technique to analyze the amount and the strength of adsorbed oxygen species. Fig. 7a and b shows the evolution of TCD signal obtained during  $\text{O}_2$ -TPD experiments for  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{CoO}_3$  and  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$  samples, respectively. The profiles clearly show two distinct regions where oxygen is desorbed, related to different  $\text{O}_2$  species: the so-called  $\alpha$ -oxygen (<550 °C) and  $\beta$ -oxygen (>550 °C)

[39].  $\alpha$ -Oxygen comprises weakly adsorbed species at the surface and lattice oxygen generated from the dislocations or grain frontiers [27]. Only the oxygen released from vacancies located very near to or on the surface is likely to desorb at this temperature. On the other hand,  $\beta$ -oxygen accounts for oxygen being released from inner layers of the lattice, which could cause the reduction of B site cation [27].



**Fig. 7.** O<sub>2</sub>-TPD profiles of (a) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and (b) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub>, with x ranging from 0 to 0.5 perovskites.



**Fig. 8.** Evolution of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and total desorbed oxygen species with substitution degree for: (a) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and (b) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites.

**Fig. 7a** shows O<sub>2</sub>-TPD profiles of La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> samples and **Fig. 8a** the evolution of different oxygen species (O<sub>α</sub>, O<sub>β</sub> and O<sub>TOTAL</sub>) with substitution degree. As already observed by H<sub>2</sub>-TPR strontium doping does not induce any change in the cobalt oxidation state, and thus, the positive charge defect due to the substitution of La<sup>3+</sup> by Sr<sup>2+</sup> should be balanced by the formation of oxygen vacancies [33,40–44]. As can be observed, substitution degree up to 30%, i.e. La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub>, nearly triples the amount of O<sub>α</sub> species with respect to the non-substituted sample, which could be also related to the promotion of specific surface area [45]. On the contrary, substitution degrees higher than 0.4 penalize the amount of O<sub>α</sub> species due to formation of surface impurities which reduce surface area. With respect to O<sub>β</sub>, La substitution by Sr enhanced the formation of these species in the whole range. However, we verified by MS that TCD signal variations for temperatures higher than 600 °C were not only due to O<sub>2</sub> desorption but also due to CO<sub>2</sub> formation by surface carbonates decomposition. This explains the remarkable increase in the TCD signal at temperatures higher than 600 °C for perovskite samples with high substitution degree, as those samples presented high amount of surface impurities, as revealed by XRD.

La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples (**Fig. 7b**) show the same desorption regions identified for Mn based samples attributed to O<sub>α</sub> and O<sub>β</sub>. However, strontium doping does not result in a significant change of O<sub>α</sub> species in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples, as opposite to La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> (**Fig. 8b**). Thus, charge compensation in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples

seems to be accomplished preferably by modification of Mn oxidation state (as observed by H<sub>2</sub>-TPR) rather than formation of oxygen vacancies. In the high temperature region, the oxygen desorption peak situated around 600–700 °C is assigned to the release of lattice oxygen which results in the reduction of Mn<sup>4+</sup> ions to Mn<sup>3+</sup>. This peak shifts to lower temperature and tends to increase as Sr substitution degree is increased, which suggests a higher facility of oxygen to diffuse along the lattice and a higher Mn<sup>4+</sup> content [33]. It is worth to note that an additional peak appears around 800 °C for high Sr substituted samples which is assigned to the decomposition of surface impurities in the form of carbonates, mainly SrCO<sub>3</sub>. Higher content of impurities changes the O<sub>2</sub> desorption profile for La<sub>0.5</sub>Sr<sub>0.5</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub>.

### 3.2.5. Surface elemental composition and oxidation states (XPS)

X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) is a surface-sensitive technique and provides information of the surface elemental composition and the oxidation state of each compound, which could be modified by Sr doping [44,46–48]. Surface composition and binding energies of La 3d<sub>5/2</sub>, Co 2p<sub>3/2</sub>, Sr 3d<sub>5/2</sub> and O 1s core levels were recorded by XPS for LaCoO<sub>3</sub> perovskites (Fig. S7). La 3d<sub>5/2</sub> transition was deconvoluted in two different contributions located at 832.9 and 834.6 eV with their corresponding shake up satellites. These contributions were assigned to La accommodated within the lattice and segregated lanthanum as an oxide (La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>), respectively. Similar

behavior was observed for Sr 3d<sub>5/2</sub> transition, fitting the observed spectra with two contributions located at 131.6 and 133.5 eV with their corresponding shake up satellites, and again assigned to contributions due to lattice and segregated strontium phases, mainly as SrCO<sub>3</sub>, as observed by XRD. O 1s transition shows a broad emission line between 526 eV and 536 eV, which can be deconvoluted into three distinct peaks around 528.8, 531.2 and 534.0 eV. Lower BE value signal corresponds to lattice oxygen bonded to cations in the crystal structure (O<sup>2-</sup><sub>latt</sub>). Intermediate binding energy contribution (O<sub>ads</sub>) is ascribed to O=C or O=C bonds, as for example in carbonates, oxygen bonded to cations as segregations (La<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> or Co<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>) or weakly bonded O<sub>2</sub> (associated with surfaces defects, i.e. surface vacancies). The signal at highest binding energy values is due to water and hydroxyl groups on the surface [33,49–52]. Co 2p<sub>3/2</sub> transition shows a strong asymmetric peak around 779.5 eV with a weak satellite peak at 790 eV. The former signal could be resolved into two components attributable to Co<sup>3+</sup> (779.5 eV) and Co<sup>2+</sup> (780.7) in a hybrid oxidation state environment, respectively. Besides, an additional contribution at 782.1 eV (with a shake-up satellite at 784.5) is needed in order to fit experimental data, which is assigned to Co<sup>2+</sup> in a CoO segregated phase [37].

**Table 6** presents Sr/Co and La/Co atomic surface ratios along with ratios of lattice oxygen and segregated strontium with respect to total oxygen and strontium content, respectively. As can be observed there is a surface enrichment of Sr and La irrespective of strontium doping degree, i.e. surface atomic ratio of strontium and La with respect to cobalt is notably higher than the theoretical value shown in brackets, which is in line with lanthanum and strontium segregates observed by XRD. On the other hand, it can be observed that segregated strontium fraction increases with increasing strontium doping degree, revealing a limited accommodation capacity of Sr in the La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> lattice. With respect to O<sub>2</sub>, decreasing contribution of lattice oxygen is detected in the O 1s transition as Sr doping increases, balanced with an increase contribution of oxygen adspecies or oxygen bonded to cations as segregations.

Similar procedure was followed with Sr doped LaMnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites, recording La 3d<sub>5/2</sub>, Mn 2p<sub>3/2</sub>, Sr 3d<sub>5/2</sub> and O 1s transitions by XPS (Fig. S8). For these samples, it was possible to deconvolute La 3d<sub>5/2</sub> transition in a unique component situated at 834.0 eV along with the shake-up satellite, assigned to lanthanum being part of the perovskite lattice. In contrast, as already observed for LaCoO<sub>3</sub> perovskites, two different components were needed to fit experimental Sr 3d<sub>5/2</sub> transition, assigned to lattice and segregated strontium. Asymmetrical signal at 641.6 eV was recorded for Mn 2p<sub>3/2</sub> transition with a weak satellite. Quantification of Mn oxidation state is rather difficult by XPS, due to small differences in the binding energy of Mn<sup>4+</sup> and Mn<sup>3+</sup> ions. Binding energy of Mn 2p<sub>3/2</sub> transition appears near to the theoretical value attributed to Mn<sup>4+</sup> and Mn<sup>3+</sup>, which is indicative of a mix oxidation state [10,33,49,53,54]. O 1s transition for La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples can be deconvoluted following the same procedure as that followed for LaCoO<sub>3</sub>.

**Table 6** presents Sr/Mn and La/Mn atomic surface ratios along with ratios of lattice oxygen and segregated strontium with respect to total oxygen and strontium content, respectively. Surface enrichment of Sr and La can also be observed for La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub>. In contrast, segregated strontium versus total strontium content shows a constant value irrespective of strontium doping degree, which reveals a larger accommodation capacity of Sr in the lattice of La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples with respect to La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub>. Note also that for the same Sr doping degree segregated strontium is much higher in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> than La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub>.

### 3.2.6. NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation of Sr-doped perovskites

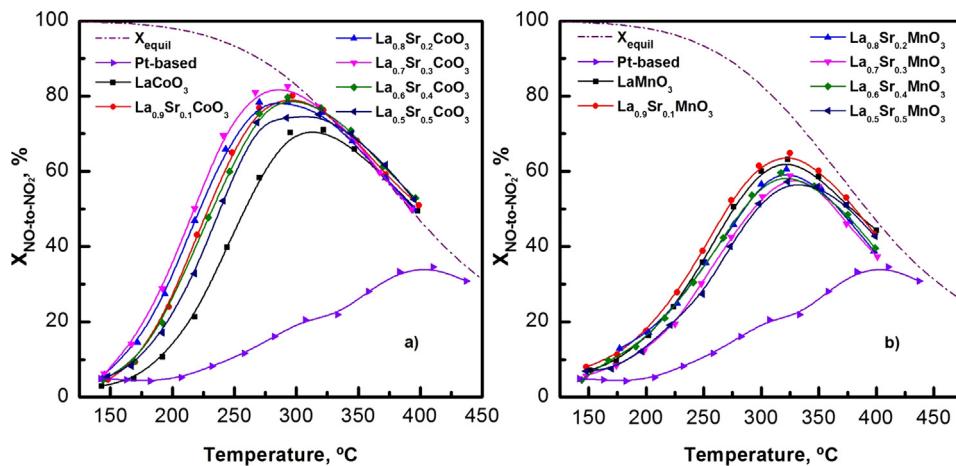
NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation capacity of Co and Mn perovskites with different Sr contents are plotted in **Fig. 9**, including the evolution of

the equilibrium conversion with temperature for the chosen reaction conditions (broken lines). The oxidation capacity of a platinum model catalyst (1.5% Pt–15% BaO/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) is also included in both cases for comparison purpose. Strontium doped LaCoO<sub>3</sub> samples further improve NO conversion in comparison to non-substituted sample, especially at intermediate temperatures. Among prepared samples, La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> perovskite presented the best NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> performance (**Fig. 9a**), with a maximum NO conversion of 83% at 300 °C (71% achieved with LaCoO<sub>3</sub>, and only 34% at 410 °C with Pt-based conventional catalyst). We suggest that optimum activity of La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> perovskite is the result of best balance between  $\alpha$  oxygen species (O<sub>2</sub>-TPD) and BET surface area. It has been observed that strontium doping promotes the formation of  $\alpha$  oxygen species but does not induce any change in the oxidation state of Co, remaining as Co<sup>3+</sup> irrespective of Sr doping. Thus, it can be deduced that higher  $\alpha$  oxygen species implies higher oxygen mobility and higher exchange capacity between lattice and feed stream oxygen, which increases the amount of active oxygen for NO oxidation [55]. Besides, among Sr doped perovskites, La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> presented high exposed surface area (20.3 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>). In contrast, Sr doping above 30% has a negative impact on the amount of  $\alpha$  oxygen species and surface area due to the presence of impurities derived from Sr structural saturation, and thus results in a lower oxidation capacity.

However, Sr doping slightly promotes oxidation capacity of Mn based perovskites (**Fig. 9b**). In fact, only La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> formulation presented improved NO conversion with respect to the non-substituted sample. Note that Sr doping induced minor changes in  $\alpha$  oxygen species, which reflect lower promotion of oxygen vacancies. As above discussed, charge imbalance generated by substitution of La<sup>3+</sup> by Sr<sup>2+</sup> could be easily compensated by Mn<sup>4+</sup> formation, as observed by H<sub>2</sub>-TPR. Apparently, formation of  $\alpha$  oxygen species promotes NO oxidation in a greater extent than the presence of Mn<sup>4+</sup> in the perovskite. In this sense, it is worth to note that the La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> formulation presented higher  $\alpha$  oxygen species than the non-substituted sample, but no further promotion was observed with increasing Sr doping [25].

Sr promotes in a higher degree the NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation capacity of Co perovskites than Mn ones, which suggests that the amount of oxygen vacancies is the key factor for this enhancement. The promotion effect is maximum at intermediate temperatures and results in shifting of the conversion curve to lower temperatures with respect to Mn-based formulations. As shown, both Co and Mn perovskite formulations achieve oxidation capacity much higher than Pt-based catalyst. This trend confirms that perovskites can be considered as excellent alternative for promotion of NO oxidation reactions in automotive catalysis.

Although many reports on NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> activity of perovskite-based catalysts cannot be found in the literature, we have summarized in **Table 7** reported experiments under most similar reaction conditions to those employed in this work, with the aim of comparison for use in automotive applications. Reported optimal temperature to achieve higher NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> conversion resulted in similar for most studies, i.e. 300 °C for Co-based formulations and 350 °C for Mn-based formulations. In the group of Co-based perovskites, La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> monolith by Kim et al. [25] stands out because of its higher conversion (86%) under GHSV = 30,000 h<sup>-1</sup>, [NO] = 400 ppm and [O<sub>2</sub>] = 8%. Experiments in this work have been achieved under most unfavorable reaction conditions, i.e. higher space velocities (GHSV = 123,500 h<sup>-1</sup>), and [NO] = 650 ppm and [O<sub>2</sub>] = 6% in the feedstream, resulting in NO conversion of 82.5% for the optimal formulation La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub>. Our experimental conditions were almost similar to those used by Li et al. [26], concluding in the same optimal formulation and similar NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> conversion. Ma et al. [55] suggested that small substitution of Co by Fe could lightly enhance NO conversion.



**Fig. 9.** NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation capacity of (a) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and (b) La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites with  $x$  ranging from 0 to 0.5, together with model Pt based catalyst.

Making comparisons between Mn-based formulations, La<sub>0.9</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> reported by Chen et al. [14] stands out because of its high NO conversion (85%) in the presence of water and CO<sub>2</sub>, although under most favorable reaction conditions, only 100 ppm of NO and as high as 10% O<sub>2</sub> in the feedstream. La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> perovskite prepared in this work achieved 65% of NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> conversion.

#### 4. Conclusions

Preparation procedure of LaCoO<sub>3</sub> and LaMnO<sub>3</sub> perovskites was optimized for enhancing textural properties, and for obtaining pure perovskites, which resulted in the best NO-to-NO<sub>2</sub> oxidation performance. NO oxidation kinetic experiments at differential conditions ( $X_{\text{NO}} < 15\%$ ) revealed higher intrinsic activity of LaCoO<sub>3</sub> than LaMnO<sub>3</sub> perovskite, when reaction rates were normalized per square meter of exposed surface area, and activation energies resulted in 40.5 and 17.6 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>, respectively.

Partial substitution of La by Sr in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples affect textural properties, oxidation state of transition metal ions and formation of oxygen vacancies. Surface area was optimized for La<sub>0.8</sub>Sr<sub>0.2</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> (21.4 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>) and La<sub>0.6</sub>Sr<sub>0.4</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> (47.9 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>). Higher strontium doping led to the detection of strontium carbonate as a segregated phase by XRD, revealing a limited ability of perovskites to accommodate strontium in the lattice, especially for LaCoO<sub>3</sub>, also supported by XPS analysis. The observed surface area penalization for high Sr doped perovskites could be linked to the presence of a segregated strontium phase that could block the access to the pores.

The positive charge defect due to the substitution of La<sup>3+</sup> by Sr<sup>2+</sup> in the La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> perovskites lattice is balanced by the formation of oxygen vacancies with no modification of the oxidation state of cobalt, as it was revealed by H<sub>2</sub>-TPR and O<sub>2</sub>-TPD experiments. On the other hand, charge compensation in La<sub>1-x</sub>Sr<sub>x</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples is accomplished preferably by the increase of Mn oxidation state rather than formation of oxygen vacancies.

Among the prepared catalysts La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> and La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> samples present the highest NO conversion, 83% and 65%, respectively, with a further improvement in comparison to non-substituted samples, 71% and 63%, respectively. Note that strontium doping is much more relevant in Co based perovskites rather than Mn based ones. The NO conversion enhancement observed for La<sub>0.7</sub>Sr<sub>0.3</sub>CoO<sub>3</sub> could be related with the higher amount of O<sub>α</sub> species, which implies higher oxygen mobility and exchange capacity between lattice and gas phase oxygen, and also due to higher surface area. Remind that no modi-

fication of cobalt oxidation state was noticed. On the other hand, NO conversion enhancement observed for La<sub>0.9</sub>Sr<sub>0.1</sub>MnO<sub>3</sub> could be exclusively related to the higher amount of O<sub>α</sub> species, which are not further promoted with higher strontium doping. Neither Mn<sup>4+</sup> content nor surface area seems to be critical factors for increasing NO conversion. Perovskite formulations achieved much higher NO oxidation conversion when compared to a platinum based catalyst which makes them promising base catalysts for automobile applications.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.apcatb.2017.04.068>.

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